

ROSE WEISS HERSTIK
MEMORIES OF A LIFETIME

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Rise With Honor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Home; The Tragedy
Chapter Two: Concentration Camps; Auschwitz
Chapter Three: The Liberation; Freedom
Chapter Four: Prague
Chapter Five: Israel
Chapter Six: America

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1995

Rose Weiss Herstik

Rose Weiss Herstik

My Grandmother's Sickness

I was almost eighteen years old. It was already 1941. We were wearing the "yellow star". The men went to the working camps. The Jewish holidays were sad. But we tried to do the best we could. For Rosh Hasana, my grandmother prepared a goose. She cleaned and opened the bird, and cut her finger with a bone. The finger became infected and she did not clean the infection properly. Until the morning the whole right hand was swollen and blue. The blood poisoning went up and up. We ran to the hospital, but it was too late. The hand had to be amputated over the elbow. We did not know for a few days if she will live. Her life hung in the balance. I was sitting in the hospital all the time crying and praying. A miracle happened, she stayed alive. She came home and was very brave. I stayed with her day and night. That was my first nursing job. She did with one hand cooking and she was cheerful. The situation for us Jews got rapidly worse. It came 1942, the concentration camps.

September 1995

MEMORIES OF A LIFETIME

Rose Weiss Herstik was born September 1, 1921, went to concentration camp March 22, 1942 and was liberated May 5, 1945.

This book is dedicated to my children and grandchildren. It is a part of me which will always stay with them after my death. It is my life story they should remember. There is always hope in life. A strong spirit and love are the main forces in life to conquer all the evil. Understanding and tolerance toward your fellow man is a light toward a better world. The Holocaust can never be forgotten.

With all my love to my family,

Rose Weiss Herstik

Rose Weiss Herstik

MEMORIES OF A LIFETIME

It could have been called Indian Summer. The September sun was shining through the redish-brown leaves of the trees. The small town had its siesta time. The bells from the three church towers were performing the twelve o'clock duty. Reminding the citizens about lunch time.

The town looked peaceful and lazy. It was the year 1921. The world was resting after a tremendous belly-ache. It was after World War I.

This small town in the small country was in the heart of Europe, the new democracy of Czechoslovakia. The people were happy. The town was in Slovakia and it was called TRNAVA. It was a prosperous town surrounded with rich farmland. The people were predominantly of the Catholic religion and there lived in the town also some Jewish families in harmony together. The town was called the small "Rome" because of the churches and the kloister.

PART I

X A half century is a very long time in a human life. Here I am reaching at looking back on a very rich life full of pain and love *

I always secretly wished to have a genius of a powerful pen. My intelligence was high enough, but without an education in the English language I felt it had no real meaning or value.

I am full of unexpressed feelings looking back on my life. It is rolling back, like a lava which I don't know how to stop, and I don't know how to fully express on paper.

It is a true story but not a simple one. The twentieth century, war, and peace, and war.

The little old lady, my beloved grandmother is the everyday Heroin. The world is full of them, but nobody appreciates them too much.

I was born on September 1, 1921. Maybe it was a moon in the sky, or a shiny day. Nobody told me ever. It is of no importance.

My parents, a young middle class couple. My mother a beautiful brunette, twenty years old, and my father, a handsome, successful twenty-five year old business man. How lucky could a new born baby get, to be born into a beautiful young family.

The booming business of my fathers and his four brothers, grew a very comfortable living. My mother could afford help in the house. The help was a girl with desires just like any young girl, but not lucky enough to reach the same goal like my mother.

The first six weeks is like a green light "GO" for babies and mothers life together. It is like a proof that you can start to be a member of this big kaleidoscope called World.

It was probably a beautiful September day, when the leaves from the trees start to be reddish, and the sunset is just warm enough for a walk. The middle European small town was friendly, and majestic which filled the churches, crowned with slender towers, and laced with gardens. In the middle of the small market place was the statue of the past, and history of the town.

This memorable day, a pretty young woman, went happy for the first time after the birth of the baby, out shopping. She left the baby in the care of the maid. It was not planned to be tragic.

But fate has a powerful hand, and it is like a chess-player, pushing his figures back and forth. He is

sometimes a cruel master in his play.

The maid, a young woman, filled with love and passions like a flower in the hands of her lover. A flower, with petals you can water with love or ~~love~~ willfully.

The day was just right for the long planned burglary. The young couples shining new household, and the few pieces of silverware have been very tempting to the maid, and her lover. With the lady of the house missing, for few hours, the opportunity was great. To pack everything and dissappear.

The young mother, always conscious of the well-being of the baby, decided to go home before time. The criminal lovers, just were ready to leave the house with their pockets full of silverware. Through the window they saw the young woman approaching the house. Frightened and panicked, the man took a butcher knife and with animal cruelty stepped behind the door. The young mother, happy without suspicion went to her death.

The dead woman, was put in a blanket and thrown in the bathroom, poured on with gasoline, and a match was started to finish the tragedy. But the master Fate, meant to hold on to the baby! Rose Weiss had to live and prove her strength. Her life started with tears, tragedy and blood.

MY GRANDMOTHER!

(written April 17, '71)

How would you express fullest your love and respect when the English you speak, and write is not rich enough, and your heart and mind are full.

My grandmother was a small lady, with a powerful personality. The pioneering energy like an American woman, a heart of a Jews mother, and a will-power of steel!

She was the mother of my father, and his four brothers left from thirteen boys she brought to the world.

Rose Weiss Herstik

It seemed, that after that tragic day in September, she bravely stepped in the chariot, to tame the wild horses of fate, and make them a team!

She took charge of the baby, filled her screaming mouth with a bottle of milk and tried to dry the tears of a young grieving father.

It never occurred to me til late in life the full tragedy of that moment, long time ago. The young mother full with knife holes, the smoke of the burning house, and the crying screaming baby. A perfect scene for a horror movie. But terribly true!

The time is a big healer. My father remarried and a three year old Rose had a baby sister, Edith.

But it seemed like Rose, the little girl, was the baby of the whole family. Fathers four brothers and their wives, felt responsible, and protected her. Grandmother was the start, and the end of the world she lived in. The little girls small bed was the security of her surroundings.

My grandmothers life was filled with good deeds. Her little apartment was a center point for all her grandchildren, numbering eight. Every Sunday meetings of the whole family bearing mess after eating cornflower seeds. The majestic family seder with specialy antique cups and little wine cups for the children. And her devotion to the people living and dead. They were calling her always where somebody died to wash and dress them; it was her pure labor of love!

The spring cherries, tied in bunches for every child coming into her little apartment. She loved everybody. Her story telling talent made my bones chill, or my heart fill with sunshine. We children used to come and sit after school around a big table and listen to the wisdom that only life and experience can give.

But Rose was always the star of her heart, the child, with need of love and happiness. Grandmother was an old

end on 5

Rose Weiss Herstik

Rose Weiss Herstik

THE DOOM: PART II

The Jews in Europe went like cattle to the camp with the belief that honest work will not harm them. They could not imagine in their wildest nightmare what a concentration camp would be. And until today, the unbelievable true story of the camp and Holocaust is for many people, unbelievable. I myself look back on my life with amazement. I think now that a human being has unbreakable strength when put to the test. Maybe many people believe that this horror should be forgotten and that the story should not be repeated. But I believe that the story has to be told, many times, so we do not forget what a precious possession FREEDOM is. We should not abuse it, and take it for granted. Our children and their children should never have such experiences. They should always work toward peace, and put human beings, whatever they are on a pedestal and have goodwill towards eachother. I know this is ideal, but may we reach for it always until it is real. After the camp I wished so much to contribute in some way toward good will between people. I was not strong enough to do something. Maybe my story will help my sons and their children to understand.

woman with a young heart, and a rare wisdom.

The years go by, they bring us closer and closer to fulfill our fate! It was the year 1942.

The seventeen year old Rose was small and dainty, but strong in will and intelligence. She liked to read, and had a curious mind. She liked to be informed about the world.

Hitler had his claws all around Europe, and the year of 1942 was a turning point for the Czechoslovakian Jews. The Hlinka guard and the Germans made a good job of cleaning up and swept out all the Jews. It was the year of Doom for the European Jews.

It was March 1942. We had already to wear the yellow star. Our parents lost their business' and livelihood. I was nineteen years old.

In the evening was curfew for the Jewish people. My grandmother had her arm above the elbow amputated. She had blood poisoning and there were not available enough doctors. The Jewish ones had to go to the working camps.

I remember it as if it were today. It was the 22nd of March. It was cold and raining. I was home, grandmother was not feeling well, she was in her early seventies. The same age like I am now.

Czechoslovakia was already occupied by Germans. Slovakian president, Tiso, was a Facsist. He started his own army called Gardists. They were modeled after the SS men.

That March rainy afternoon somebody banged on the kitchen door. I opened the door and a Gardist and SS man were standing at the door. They were asking me are you Rose Weiss? I said yes. They were demanding I go right away with them. Grandmother started to cry and started to beg them to let me be. She told them she is handicapped and needs me. They did not care. In the meantime, my mother came in. She packed me a brown bag with a few apples and some cans of sardines and bread.

I did put on my warm coat and shoes. Said goodbye to mother and grandmother. I never saw my grandmother again.

The SS men and gardists took me to the Jewish elementary school, it was late afternoon and the school was filled up with young people. There was not a sitting place. We were there the whole night and early in the morning they lined us up and we marched to the railroad station. I saw my father and my uncles, they did not allow them to tell us goodbye. We traveled two hours to the capital of Slovakia, Bratislava. They brought us through the whole city on both sides of the road were mounted on horses gardists and people filled the streets screaming at us insults and throwing stones and rotten vegetables. They brought us to an old abandoned factory. We were sitting the whole night without food and water. There were already other people with children and old people. We shared the little food we had.

In the early morning they lined us up once more and took us to an abandoned railroad station. The train was long and the windows of the train were boarded with wood. We were pushed in the train, it was dark and almost without air. We traveled two days and nights. The stench from urine and no food. Once more we shared what we had.

Suddenly the train stopped. Outside was a big commotion and screaming. They opened the doors from the train. It was afternoon. SS men and SS women with dogs pushed us and beat us with sticks screaming with foul language. They started to separate us in groups; young people separated from old people and children. I saw the name of the station, "OSVENCIN" or AUSCHVITZ.

They put us with screaming and beating in line of fives and we started to walk. We walked around a square building without windows and big chimney. That time we did not know it was a crematorium. Suddenly we came to a big iron door and it was open. The place was fenced in, on four corners

Rose Weiss Herstik

were towers and in every tower was standing an SS man with a rifle. Over the iron dorrs was written in German, in big letters, "Arbeit Macht Frei" or " Work Makes You Free."

They separated us from the men at the doors. The big camp in Auswitz with the grandiose entrance was surrounded with electric fence and five or six towers with SS men standing in them, ready to shoot with their machine Guns. The SS men were standing at the doors inviting us in with pushing and beating. The camp consisted of a long yard and five stone buildings, gray and dark-looking. It was a cold March morning. We were shivering, hungry and exhausted. But we did not yet have the feeling that the world ended for us. That sick feeling crept upon us just a few days later and we were terribly frightened. The SS men with the dogs were pushing us together in five-man lines. The foul language and a stick on our backs were constant companions. At the door of the building they made us strip nude. The freezing air and the embarrassment were just a prelude to the coming horrors. We put our clothing in bundles, and other SS men took them away in carts. The camp was quiet and dead. It came my line to go into the building, and fear gripped my soul and the feeling of a big tragedy was in my heart. Soon I had to be just a number without brain and soul, only a zombie. The room we entered was big, like a warehouse. Women and girls were lined up in a single line. Everybody was nude. SS women were at the other end of the warehouse at a big table piled with uniforms. SS men cut our hair and then shaved our heads and pubic hair. Our eyes and faces were drowning in tears. Soon we looked at each other with unbelieving and frightened eyes. The SS women gave us Russian uniforms sterilized from lice and bugs. We put the uniforms over our naked bodies. It was rough like straw. Big wooden Dutch shoes completed the outfit.

It was late afternoon when they let us out in the gray yard. A few people, in the same gray uniforms and the same hollow faces and without hair, like ourselves, greeted us in our language. They had come two days earlier than we did. The shadows started to fall on us like a heavy wet blanket. The SS women started to push and shove us like a herd of animals into a big room lined up with three rows of wooden beds, two stories high. The screaming and pushing was

Rose Weiss Herstik

was unbelievable.

Nobody wanted to sleep on the bottom beds. The beds had sacks filled with straw and a thin blanket. In a half hour everybody found a place. I found one on an upper bed. Our stomachs revolted when a gong called us to dinner. Once more, with beatings and screaming, we lined up. In the front of the line was standing a woman in a striped dress with a red triangle insignia on her sleeve. We found out that the red triangle was the insignia for political prisoner; the green triangle was for thieves, and the black triangle was the insignia of the prostitutes. Finally the yellow star on our breast was the sign of the Jews. I came to the tables with empty stomach and great hope, a wooden spoon and a dish were pushed into my hands. They filled up the dish with what I hoped to be soup. They put in my hand a little round piece of cheese. It was sticky and the odor was terrible. Everybody was climbing on her bed to eat her meal. Our disappointment was terrible, even with grumbling stomachs we could not eat it. The soup was dirty water, without taste. The cheese was full of worms. In a few days we learned to clean up the worms, to drink the dirty warm water, to eat the stale and rotten bread. We were too hungry and my survival instinct was too great. Deep down I promised myself to survive, no matter what, and that determination and my lucky star guided me.

The night was quiet, the heaven was filled with stars and the moon was smiling like he would want to give us courage. When they pushed us into the gray yard and lined us up for the famous first "Cellapell." The lines were long over the whole yard and maybe ten lines. SS women with dogs were running between the lines like mad, with cursing and beating. They were counting us. Our shaved heads were falling on our shoulders and our eyes were closing themselves from little sleep and hunger. We were standing at least two hours, and this ceremony went on for three and a half years. Suddenly the gong liberated us from standing. The food was prepared; pushing and shoving started. The hot water and little piece of bread was our daily ration. This time I ate the bread

Rose Weiss Herstik

and drank the hot water. Suddenly SS men started to put us in five-row lines, and with dogs directing us toward the main entrance. It was the first time we went through the streets of the camp.

F February 29, 1976: The early Sunday morning give me the courage to write. I try to put together my thoughts and direct them to the long-forgotten happenings. ✕

The SS men, the dogs, and the column of poor-looking creatures were heading a long forest way, which had been a daily journey for a very long time. Suddenly a men's column appeared before our eyes. They were standing by the edge of the road with their backs toward us. Some of them were lying bloody on the earth. The screaming SS and their valuable beasts were running around them with heavy sticks dancing on their poor heads and backs. For one horrid minute I saw my poor father standing on the edge of the group. Our eyes met and filled with heavy tears. It was the last time I saw my dear father alive. Two weeks later I managed to find out that he died.

We came to an unfinished road. On the end of the mud road was standing a wooden shack filled with shovels and other tools. Everybody received a shovel. Six big lines of steel wagons on wheels were filled with earth always. Three of us had to push the wagons toward the road. What our strength could not manage, the stick on our backs pushed through. Before my eyes I imagined the ancient Jews in Egypt and the history comes alive once more. In my poor head I saw myself reincarnated, and I hoped for a Moses. We started to fill the road with earth.

The day was long and gray. It was broken only once at lunch-time for fifteen minutes when we were fed with a soup cooked with all kinds of stale bread and a few foul potatoes. The climate was subtropical. The heat mixed soon with rain, and our clothing was either wet or dried stiff on our bodies. The itching was unbearable.

At five o'clock the whistle came like a sound of light. We picked up our tools and with cursing lines up our tired, beaten bodies. We had to help the older women walk. At the doors of

Rose Weiss Herstik

Auschwitz stood on both sides a line of SS women in uniform who were pushing us toward the yard like cattle to line us up into a cellapell. Suddenly I saw new faces. One familiar face winked at me and screamed, "Your mother and sister are here, too." After the "appeal," I ran to the block where the new people were. I found my mother and sister frightened and crying. We embraced each other, and crying we went to my block where we managed to find two beds together.

The mornings were filled with "appeals," screaming and beating before we were pushed to work. We were always running to the colony of people where we thought there might be easier work. But there were lots of us, and a colony had only twenty to thirty people and the pushing and the beating was great before the colony could form. Our backs were blue and our eyes were swollen. The first days when we had our menstrual period, no paper or anything was available; the blood was running over our legs for days. But they gave us bromide in our drinks and fortunately the periods stopped.

Day after day we became more like zombies or beasts. The hunger made us lose our minds, and some of us became beasts. They were stealing bread from each other. My mother and sister and I watched our precious bread like gold.

One Sunday, about four weeks in Auschwitz, they lined us up, and the whole camp was moving out. We went around the smoking crematorium on the way through the forest. It was a crisp, beautiful morning. I remember it exactly. When we came to a big fenced place with the sign "BIRKENOW," it was nothing written there about "working making free," as at the entrance to Auschwitz. The camp had a high electric fence which obviously was the last resort if you did not want to live, you just had to touch it. And it happened more and more often.

The small barracks were wooden with stumped up earth, on the floor and the beds were dark holes with straw-filled mattresses. In the front stood a kettle for food and a wooden table. There was no water, no lights. From Auschwitz to come to Birkenau was

Rose Weiss Herstik

like from a jail to come to a dungeon. Four people were pushed in one hole, called bed. We learned later that Birkenow used to be the camp for the Russian prisoners of war, and some few thousand died there, in a short time, of typhoid fever. We inherited their uniforms and their contaminated barracks. We went to look for toilets and water. There were only latrines. Pieces of wood behind the barracks and a hole. For a short time everybody had diarrhea, and with no water; there was only one water pipe for every barracks. The started to be terrible. The "appeals" were longer and started earlier. People fell while standing and died. Everyday we brought home from work more dead people. If they did not from hunger, they died from beating. It looked to us as if the SS men were required to bring every day a certain amount of dead people to the camp. We started to organize things to stay alive. Some men used to come for work to camp and bring in certain things, like pieces of paper, black coal tablets against diarrhea, and worn socks. We started to exchange for our bread when we could manage not to eat. The exchange market was big. But if an SS man or woman caught somebody, it was his life. We did not care anymore. Every minute we had for ourselves we cleaned the lice from our clothing, big white lice that the room was full of, and they brought the fever.

Every barracks has its "blockalteste." It was one of us, strong and cruel enough to go around to cheat us of our bread and beat us up in the barracks. The holes called beds were messed up from diarrhea, stinking and sometimes rats were our partners for our meager meal. The fever was spreading fast. The streets of the camp were filled up like pyramids with dead people. It left us cool.

In the front of the camp close to the fences were two separate barracks called the death barracks. Everyday after work, SS men were roaming the streets of the camp, and in the barracks, to catch sick and older-looking people. They put them in the two

Rose Weiss Herstik

barracks without food and drink and they slept only on the floors. Then they came in every two days and filled big trucks with those people and took them to the gas chambers.

My mother, Edith and I had swollen feet. Mine were full of holes on the ankles. One day we managed with heavy heart to leave our mother in the camp, hiding her behind the dirty mattress, for she was sick.

When we came to the camp, it was very quiet and empty. We managed to run in the barracks. But mother was not there. It was October, 1942, that day the SS brought trucks to the camp, put everybody there on the trucks and took them to the gas chamber. Three thousand women in one single day.

We found out later when the Blockteste told us: "They pushed everybody in the trucks. The screaming, crying and begging was horrible. They just took them like cattle to slaughter."

With time, we learned all kinds of tricks to survive. To stay away from the dogs, to find the easier work, to organize, to manage to have water and a little piece of soap. Our hair was cut every month and our heads were shaved bald.

One episode sticks out in my mind like a sore: One day we could not manage to find a group of the easier work and Edith and I were pushed toward the other group. An SS man with a stick and a vicious dog made us go in line. After an hour's walk, we came to a village. All the houses were half-demolished from bombarding. It was empty and sad. In front of the battered houses were long, heavy tree trunks. It would have taken ten to fifteen very strong men to pick them up.

The skeleton-looking girls were put before each house to pick up the heavy tree trunks. We were stumbling, falling, and some were killed before each group could pick up a heavy load. We were put in position with screaming and always present foul language against the front wall of the house which was still intact. The front girl was facing the wall and the last one was facing the SS man with the dog. With our last strength, we pushed against the

Rose Weiss Herstik

wall, back and forth until it cracked and fell apart, and the house was broken to pieces. The first girls were always killed from falling stones and wall. The evening brought back only half of the colony. We dragged the dead behind us, holding their hands and feet. We did not care; we were dead inside, too. But time does not stand still. Sometimes it is good and lucky. We learned to survive like animals.

We found out with Edith, about a colony called "The Reed Ridinghood." It was an elite colony of fifty girls, every morning going to the barracks where was stored all the goods which the unfortunate people brought to Auschwitz. All their possessions, jewelry, furs, money, food, preserves, cosmetics, their family albums, and the crippled ones, their wheelchairs. Before everybody went to the "shower" in the gas chamber, he was stripped nude of everything.

The fifty girls came every morning to work in these barracks to sort and bundle these items. Everything went to Germany; and the blankets and warm clothing went to the soldiers on the Front. But it was comfortable, warm work, and you could fill up your stomach and sometimes despite great danger, bring things back to the camp.

One morning we pushed ourselves in the group between the "furriers." Edith and I understood furs; our father and his brothers had a large fur business.

We were lucky. It was comfortable work after our year of grueling experiences. Even with the danger of dogs and beatings, it was almost human. In 1943 returning to the camp after work, brought us to a less filled camp and cleaner beds and less lice and rats. But not for long. Suddenly transports started to pour in from Hungary. These people brought in news about the crumbling front. Our hopes were high but it was a very long time before the freedom would come.

Edith was sick and had a high fever. I tried to hide her between the furs. When we came back to camp I dragged her onto the

Rose Weiss Herstik

mattress. It took weeks full of danger and ~~g~~iding before she came out of the fever. She looked like a skeleton, but we all did. The hunger, sickness, and malnutrition and dirt were our constant companions.

One morning in May we were standing before the main entrance ready to go out to work, The last weeks the camp was full of newcomers as the transports from Hungary kept coming. And the transports to the gas chamber were numerous. We were already the few old ones. The new ones were now the ones to be dragged to the gas chamber. Colonies of old people, children and mothers went always straight from the trains to the gas chamber.

Standing in the front suddenly they were calling names. The capo--the name of the Jewish camp policemen--took out people from the lines. Suddenly I heard my name called. My heart froze and I was holding on to Edith's hand. The capo came to me and screamed at me. "I am calling your name. Why don't you answer? Are you a dressmaker?"

I had to reply that I am. He said, "Come on with me." Edith started to scream and I cried. But it was not possible to avoid it. With heavy heart I had to go with the capo. He brought me to a barracks where there were supplies. An SS woman was waiting for me. She handed me a clean striped dress, socks and shoes. I looked at her in amazement. I dressed, and she said, "Let's go. We're going into „Stasbsgebaüde." After two years of gruesome experiences, the first miracle happened!

Stasbsgebaüde was a building close to Auswitz, long and gray and standing by itself in the fields. It was the residence of the SS woman. Underneath it were two large rooms for about 200 prisoners. There was a large sewing room where the prisoners ~~g~~et^wed the uniforms of the SS women, and a grooming room and a laundry. Everywhere were working prisoners from the camp. They were fortunate to work there. There were showers and human-like conditions. On the first floor was a large sewing salon where prisoner-dressmakers were sewing dresses for the wives of the SS men and for the SS women. There was also a beauty shop. I did

not know these things until after I had been brought to this building whose name means "The building for the Military Staff."

The SS women took me downstairs immediately to the shower. I was standing in a shower after two years, letting the hot water pour over my body like a balsam. I thought I was dreaming. The house-servic, Maria, was an older woman, a political prisoner. She brought me underwear, a blue linen dress, a white scarf for my head and a striped white-and-blue apron. I felt like in a dream. I dressed and came out into the corridor. She took me to a low wooden table with benches. On the table was a dish filled with steaming soup and a piece of bread. I started to cry and the water from my eyes mixed with the soup.

Maria told me she will show me my bed. After I had eaten she brought me into a large long room where there were two lines of wooden beds over each other. It looked neat and clean. She showed me my bed and said she would bring me upstairs to the large sewing room.

The Strasbsgebaude had reopened the sewing room only a week before. There were only three girls and one managing prisoner girl over them. Then there were the SS women who were always present. When I came into the room, the manager looked at me and said to the SS women, "This is not my niece. This is someone else." The SS women looked at me and asked if I am a dressmaker. I replied that I am. "Then you will stay," she said, and she told the manager, "We will bring your niece, too. We need to fill up the sewing room with twenty girls."

There started my new life. I was heartbroken about Edith being behind in the camp. About a week later, new prisoners started to arrive and to fill up the laundry room and the downstairs sewing room. Someone came up to the manager and said, "Your niece is here, too." Then she brought in a girl, about sixteen years old. It was a pitiful pictures. The skin and bones body and the animal look was a look of a musselman. "Musselman" was the name a prisoner was called in the last stage, just before dying. We

Rose Weiss Herstik

all were in a way musselmen, just bone and skin, except for the last stage of the terrible diarrhea which you could not control.

When the manager screamed, "This is my niece, Rosalia Weiss," I understood how the miracle happened that I had come to the Stasbsgebäude. Our names and our occupations were the same, just the persons were different.

We started to pamper the poor little girl. The diarrhea that made her unable to walk dissappeared, and in two weeks her little body started to fill out. The sewing room was filling up with new girls and everybody was very busy. Suddenly, one morning our manager did not come in. Two days later we learned that she died of typhoid fever. Martha, one of the other girls with us, was named the manager.

I was at least two months in Stasbsgebäude and tried everyday to plead and ask Martha to influence our SS women to bring over Edith. Everyday when someone new came in and it was not Edith, my hope was lower and lower. One day one of our girls went downstairs to the bathrooms and returned to tell us that two new girls came in and "one is Edith Weiss." And finally it was my sister. I ran downstairs excited and we embraced with tears. Edith started to work in one of the storages where the SS men stored the clothing and valuables when the transports came in.

The end of 1943 brought us excitement. They started to build close to the Stasbsgebäude a new line of wooden barracks, and the gossip was that we will have to move in. It was a row of six barracks that had not been surrounded by electric wires, just the first barrack.

We spent the Christmas and New Year in Stasbsgebäude. We even arranged a play for New Year's Eve. Edith and another girl had a dance number

End of 1943, just about midnight the siren started to give out her heavy, long and broken voice. The first air attacks had started over Auswitz by the allies. The building started to shake, the lights went out, and we all squeezed together and prayed. Our

Rose Weiss Herstik

first hope was born.

After New Years, we moved into the new barracks. They were wooden but clean and comfortable and had enough water and light. The last of the barracks was reserved for the SS men and their dogs. The first one, we found out later, was the famous experimental hospital where SS Manglele was the chief doctor. It was filled with newcomers, mostly with Dutch women.

They experimented on them by taking our ovaries, kidneys, and all kinds of monstrous things. On Sundays we used to stand close to the wire around the block, and girls who had been able to work came close to the wire and told us about their horrible experiences. Very often a familiar face disappeared forever.

Our block was divided in two parts; one part had a separate entrance. Every evening when we were standing "appel" a group of gorgeous looking girls dressed in civilian clothes and clutching under their arms pillows went to work. Their faces had a heavy make-up and their hair was combed just like from a beauty shop. Nobody would have suspected that they were prisoners if they were not wearing the black triangles on their breasts and if the SS women were escorting them. They were professional German prostitutes captured in Hamburg at the "Repohbahn," the quarter of the prostitutes. In the camp they pursued their profession daily in the men's camp which was close by and built in the same style as Auswitz, with the happy inscription, "Arbeit Macht Frei,"-- "Work Makes You Free." It had the same towers, where a cannon was in firing position and an SS man was always ready to fire. The first building behind the fence was the "Pouffe," (whore house) and the working domain of the girls. Only the privileged prisoners like copos who had been rewarded for something could come to the Pouffe, like beating another prisoner to death. They then received a coupon and had to stand in line. So we heard the rumors, and their time had been measured in a 20-minute session.

The stories and rumors were wild. Some of the girls were supposed to have had preferred customers and gave them more than twenty minutes. They invented a scheme and let their lovers down

Rose Weiss Herstik

the second floor windows on ropes made out of scarves, until one night a sheet gave way and the lover-boy broke his legs.

In the mornings when we were standing appel, the prostitutes always marched in tired with smeared up faces from makeup and messed up hair. We never came in contact with them. They were the privileged group, and we were the outcasts.

One night the bombarding was very heavy. They pushed us in the cellar where they closed us when it was bombarding. We pushed ourselves together desperately like we have been protected from evil, when we are a mass together. The barracks was rocking like it would be a can of sardines, and we heard the zooming and a heavy fall of a bomb. Suddenly we rocked heavily, and a tremendous explosion and fall made us think that this is the end. But in a while a heavy quiet fell upon us, and we were alive. The siren announced the end of bombarding. It was early morning, and we had to go out and prepare to work.

In one hour we marched to work with our SS women. When we came closer to the SS barrackes, we saw with amazement that the barrack was like shoved out from the surface of the earth. The allies bombard with precision. They knew that the SS barracks were right inbetween the prisoner's barracks.

The bombarding started in the daytime too. We started to be bolder. We ran out without permission, and ran to hide in the men's back cellar which was more stable and protected. We had to move our sewing room in one of the barracks. Bombarding was now a daytime schedule. People were nourished with more hope, we did not even mind there being lots of casualties. Our lives had not been precious to us. People started to run away, and we had to stand "cellappel" for hours. One morning the siren of the running-away prisoner mixed with the heavy bombarding. The next day it was the rumor that a political figure had run away and they got him. A day later they announced the whole camp that we will witness a hanging. We saw them, through our windows, put up the gallows.

In two days we were pushed with beatings and screams into the

Rose Weiss Herstik

yard. We were standing there solemnly with tears in our eyes, following with our hearts the tall, slim woman while they were putting the rope around her neck.

We had seen in these years thousands of people die and had no emotion about it. We were degraded to animals. But with the flame of hope in our hearts, the seed of human feeling and compassion started to grow and we were human again. But the way to freedom was still a very long way off.

Edith and I promised ourselves that whatever happens we won't part anymore. It was toward the end of 1944. The days and nights were turbulent. Our SS woman started to be more personal and less rigid with us. We heard every day new news from the front. The Germans were beaten more and more.

Marta now went to sew at the chief of the concentration camp's villa for his wife. It was the SS Oberfuhrer Höss. Mrs. Höss used to come to the sewing room with her daughters. She was privileged German mother with seven children. After three children the German mothers got a medal from Hitler. And Mrs. Höss wore such a medal. She had four daughters and three sons, the youngest one being five years old. Marta needed help with the sewing and chose me to go with her.

The villa was spacious and beautiful. One side of the windows faced a small river and the other side the men's concentration camp and one of the crematoria. We worked in the attic. The food was always an "eintopf --a one pot meal, with variations but filling and good. The cooks were two old ladies, prisoners "bibleforschers." It is the same sort like the American Quakers. They had strong beliefs and had to go to camp for them. They did not want to stand cellappel and were killed for it. They did not want to handle weapons and fight at the front. They went to the concentration camp for it. The old ladies always managed to prepare a package of food for Marta and me, which we secretly brought to camp and shared with our friends.

One day we went by the 16 and the 5 year old brothers of the Höss's children. They were standing at the windows and we

Rose Weiss Herstik

heard them talking. The little one asked the older one, "What was the heavy smoke always smoking from the large chimney?" The older brother answered, "These are the heads of the Jews flying out to the sky and plastering the camp so that the other Jew prisoners have something to step on."

After three months we stopped going to the villa. The situation started to be critical. SS men started to run away and were brought back and put in a special camp. We worked little and were left in the cellars. The bombarding was heavy day and night.

One night in 1944, when the sky was full of flames and the air trembled with heavy planes, the artillery was firing and we knew that the front was closing on us.

They started to push us all in the yard like a herd of sheep. It was cold and rainy. We put on all our things we had and took a little bag filled with bread. We were standing outside for hours. Suddenly early in the morning they started to put us as usual with beating and pushing and screaming in 5-line columns and rows. We were holding hands tightly with Edith. They opened the doors of the camp and we started to march out. That was the start of the "Todesmarch," the "Deathmarch," One of the last phases of the camp before a still long liberation. Who was lucky enough to overcome the biggest horror to be reborn.

That night we started to march, flanked on both sides with SS men armed to their teeth and dogs. SS in the front and SS in the back, too. Before we left the camp everybody was given stale bread. That was the only food for a long time to come. The fire in ~~thesky~~ (bombs) and artillery fire were the companions to follow us. We were walking the whole day and following night, maybe with three half-hour rest periods. The older women started to fall down and died on the spot, or they wanted to rest and were shot immediately. We were fortunate. We were younger and, the last year better nourished than they from Birkenau. We marched on holding on to each other with new hope. But the biggest try had to

Rose Weiss Herstik

come. The second day the road started to fill up with more and more dead people. We noticed that the SS men were also fewer than before. They ran away in the surrounding woods, also nourished hope of hiding themselves. The second night we approached a barn. They did allow us to go in to sleep for a few hours. We dragged in our swollen feet on the wet straw in the icy barn. It was the end of the year. Edith unfortunately fell down and hurt her foot. She had to take down her shoes she was in big pain. In a few hours they started to scream at us to line up. By then Edith's foot was swollen like a balloon. She could not put on her shoes. She was crying and did not want to go. I was desperate. Somebody had a knife. We cut the shoe and put it on with tears and screams. I supported her. We went in the middle line away from the eyes of the SS men. We walked five days and nights toward the border. We stopped for a few hours nights' rest in some barns. More and more people wanted to run away and were caught and shot. Some people were hiding in the hay where we slept and hoped to stay there undiscovered. The SS men made always sure that nobody stayed behind alive. They always cleaned behind us when we went away. With dogs and bayonets they went through the hay and it was always bloody.

After days and nights without proper sleep and hardly any food, in the early morning hours we came to the border station between Poland and Germany.. The snow was piled high and it was the only water we had for days. A long, open cattle train was standing in the station. The wagons or cars were muddy and filled with melting snow. They put us in groups of fifty and started to push every group into the wagons like cattle. When the wagon filled up, we were crouched with our knees high up to over our noses and nobody could move. They threw in a metal can which had to be our ^{TOILET} ~~bathroom~~ for five days and five loaves of bread. The fighting started immediately and the animal instincts were once again awake.

The train started to move and the unbelievable horror

Rose Weiss Herstik

started. The gray sky over our heads started to pour heavy snow, and only the squeezed warmth of our bodies protected us from being frozen to death. Nobody dared to get up and use the can. We were afraid that if we stood up we won't have anymore place to crouch down. Our feet started to be numb. After a few hours the odor from urine started to be bigger and bigger in the wagon. Somebody got sick and started to vomit. When we did not doze, we screamed at each other like wounded animals. We were holding on to the little bread, afraid to eat it at once, and afraid it would be stolen from each other. After a day and night, the snowing stopped. We were thirsty and licked the snow. The sun came out sparingly; everything mingled together with the odor. A few people died. We were lucky it was cold, being in the company of corpses. Nobody took notice. After two days and nights the special train with its special cargo stopped. We were fed with a few loaves of bread and a can of water. We started to throw out what we could of the mess from underneath us. We used the clothing from the dead bodies to clean our hands. We dared to get us on our numb and half-dead feet into a standing position for a few minutes and squeezed ourselves back to the crouching position. After 2 days and three nights we came to a stop at the entrance to the German concentration camp Ravensbrück.

Ravensbrück was a camp mostly for German women political prisoners, thieves and prostitutes. It was smaller than Auswitz and Bir^{ne}nau. It was cleaner, and it had just one crematorium and no gas chamber. For us it was only a go-through camp for a couple of days.

They pushed us from the wagons like animals, and we were sick animals. Our feet gave up on us and our bodies were rattling skeletons. They pushed us toward the wall of a building. We fell along the wall in the freezing night. It was the wall of the crematorium building. After a few hours, the SS women came with the dogs and made us, the few who were alive, line up. The dead

Rose Weiss Herstik

bodies lined the wall of the appropriate place, the crematorium.

After an hours walk through the forest we came to a large wood building. But it was not large enough. Wehn we filed into the large room we fell on the straw thrown sparingly on the cement floor, but there was not enough room to stretch out. The pushing and kicking started between us. Everybody was bloody. Early in the morning was the cellappel after the breakfast consisting of worm water and rotten bread. Everybody hurried back to her place on the straw. Outside the building was a cistern, like a large whole with water. Everyone was drinking for it without caring that it was contaminated.

After a night and day and another horrible midnight, the SS lined us up as usual, and started to direct us like a herd of sheep toward the station. The pitiful crowd was much smaller. With unbelieving eyes we saw the long personnel train, We stumbled with Edith holding on to each other in the train and fell with relief on a bench.

The train moved as my fever started up higher and higher. I got typhoid fever. The diarrhea started to make its demands. I was lying on the bench and was a human wreck. After a few hours the train stopped in a small station. I was holding on to Edith and she was pulling me with her, with all her strength.

The small concentration camp, Malchow, our last stop. Before we came there, it was supposedly a camp for ~~make~~ war prisoners only. We did not know what had happened to them. It had a capacity of 4000 prisoners but we were six thousand. That was also the last stop for the SS men, because the front came closer and closer.

Underground at Malchow, were airplane factories. The allies were aware of them because the bombarding there was constant day and night.

The camp had only six wooden barracks for the prisoners and barracks for SS men and women, the kitchen barracks and latrines. Every barrack had outside a cistern with water. The camp was close to Lübeck¹ and close to the ocean.

Rose Weiss Herstik

We came ther in February, 1945. The Germans had a hard time on the front and were beaten more and more. But the last few months for us had to be more hell.

My sickness progressed, I was like walking death without will, but I survived. Just to stay alive, I moved when Edith took me by the hand. I ate the bread and water wehn she pushed it in my mouth. I did not speak or react at anything. I just wanted to sleep.

In about four weeks my health gradually started to come back. Youth can overcome so much, and will of survival was unbelievable.

We went to work in a colony in the fields. Everybody wanted to do that. The smell of the air was beautiful and the possibility to bring in the camp a raw potatoe was tempting but hazardous. I put the few potatoes around my skinny waist and bound my waist with a piece of string so the potatoes did not fall down.

When I was lucky I brought the potatoe in the camp. We baked it on the oven and it was a feast.

The bombardment was worse everyday. Our expectations started to be brighter.

In April 1945, the morning started half of the camp was evacuated. We were the fortunate to stay. Only two barracks were filled with people.

The unfortunates, who were put in the trains to move, were killed in the trains through bombardment. We found that out later.

The morale of the SS started to loosen up. They started to be human to us and wanted to be friendly. One morning we ^{4 pp} visitors from the International Red Cross. They handed out to us packages with goodies. We did not eat and see the things in years.

In March 1945, things started to happen. First more and more prisoners started to come in from Ravensbrück. But only a

Rose Weiss Herstik

few SS women were visible. They all seemed little by little to disappear. Food was very rare. We hung on to our Red Cross packages like gold. The morale was wild. Everybody was taking and breaking everything. The wood from broken wooden benches made nice warm fires in the evening. The SS men standing there with machine guns managed to kill prisoners who attacked the food storages. The latrines filled up with the people who were sick with diarrhea. The odor was horrible and the flies were all over. The end of March brought once more the Red Cross packages. The people were killing each other for the packages, and it looked almost like it did in Birkenau with the dead lying all over. Suddenly the last days in March came orders we have to march toward Lübeck.

The remaining ones of us lined up once more for the big trip. It was early morning. A few SS men were standing at the gates handing us the remaining packages. It had to be the last food from the camp.

We started our trip with swollen feet and hope of freedom in our hearts. It was the first time in three and a half years that Freedom was in our reach. We marched with hope. The sounds of the cannons and bombs did not bother us. We were waking up from long sleep, from deadly sleep. It was almost like reincarnation. We walked toward the woods and were walking the whole day. Suddenly the night fell upon us and the forest was filled with mystic light of cannons and falling bombs. Four girls were holding on to each other. Me, my sister, one Polish and one Czech girl. We shared our food.

December 27, 1974

Rose Weiss Herstik
Rose Weiss Herstik P.1

FREEDOM: PART I

From time to time nostalgia and memories grip my soul and heart, like a long-forgotten lover. Then I like to write.

A LONG-FORGOTTEN STORY

It was the year 1945, the glorious year when FREEDOM and the Dove of Peace spread her snowy wings after years of bloody war.

Four girls in torn dresses and with very short hair, were running between a mass of people. There were Germans, civilians, and people from German concentration camps. It sounds unbelievable--the funny mixture of people. But that was the end of war. The month was May, 1945.

The Germans were running from the glorious American and Russian armies, and the young girls were running to these armies, to the long-desired and wonderful freedom.

The last concentration camp was a small one, close to Lübek. The girls were two sisters from Czechoslovakia, another Czech girl and a Polish girl. All were in their early twenties. They had had three and a half years of concentration camp behind them, and hunger, death, and other grueling experiences.

The Bridges they crossed were now burning behind them ~~them~~, and the bombs filled the forest with mystic night-light. The girls did not mind; they had left behind them the panic, the Germans and they were running towards liberty, to meet their freedom.

They had been running, night and day, with scarcely having eaten and without rest. Finally, they came to a German village, only nine miles from their destination, the town of Lübek. Very tired, very happy, they found a farm, free from people who had left in panic.

The stables were full of animals. The kitchen table

Rose Weiss Herstik

still had warm food and candlelight. They ate. Happy and tired, they decided to sleep in the stables, in the hay.

In the morning, the noise of tanks and horses awoke them. Through a small window they witnessed history in the making: In the morning light, the Russian officers, in flying capes and on white horses, and the American officers on their tanks were greeting each other.

This wonderful morning in May, 1945, there in the small village close to the city of Lübeck, the glorious armies had their randevue. They came together to greet each other, and it was a great historical moment that I saw and lived through.

I was one of the two sisters-Rose Weiss. My younger sister was Edith. The Polish girl was Genia and the Czech girl was Lily.

THE COLORFUL WAY TOWARDS HOME!

That day and that winter, the American armies pulled back to Lübeck, and the Russian armies stayed there, as the allies had arranged it.

We did not care (about the politics). We were FREE!

Suddenly the little farm was filled with people. We four girls ran into the farm bedroom and happily took possession of the room and occupied the beds. After so many years, to sleep in a bed was a miracle!

The Russians pulled in their kitchens, with hot kettles filled with food, with mountains of bread and sacks filled with sugar.

The next day, our room looked like a market. We had torn down the drapes and made bags out of them, filled them with sugar and loaves of bread and hung them under the window. Our biggest prize--a big piece of bacon--was hanging in the corner.

The officers at night came to THE DOOR and wanted to sleep with us. WE CLOSED THE DOOR TO THE BEDROOM. The soldiers supplied us with food, and the next day they pulled back towards Poland.

We ate and ate and ate. The punishment after the feast was horrible. Our dried-out stomachs and intestines could not tolerate the food. The cramps and diarrhea were bad. We were young, and pulled through.

The bundles of food were for us a blessing, and a curse. We did not want to move and leave our supplies!

THE FIRST MOVE

The farm was suddenly a lively place. People came and went toward their homes. Polish families who had been enslaved on German farms, took the horses and carriages, filled them up and galloped toward the Polish border. All of Germany was in ashes. The towns were flattened to earth.

EPISODE 2

This episode is written and dedicated to my beloved family: To my husband about whom I am worried when he is smoking and coughing; to my son Ronie who is troubled about writing his finals; to my handsome son Mike whom I love dearly.

May, 1945. The fields miraculously started to put on their festive green habit, and the lonesome, abandoned gardens started to blush and bloom, like a young bride. We felt like we would be born once more, and see the beauty for the first time.

The four young girls were sitting in the abandoned farm house. They started to make plans about a beloved, long-expected dream--called Home. They were sitting and making plans when a wagon with two meager, near starved horses

Rose Weiss Herstik

arrived and two men stepped down, came to the kitchen and asked for water and food. They were two Polish men, heading toward the Polish border and home, so we had the same goal. It took a good measure of persuasion and lots of promises to cook and wash for the men, until they took the four skinny girls in their wagon.

A brilliant morning in May, we happily stored our provisions in the wagon and started on our way, with great expectations, toward home. The crisp morning took us through abandoned fields, and we came to small ghost towns, filled with ashes. We went to small village houses where just a short time ago people lived, and left behind their lives and dreams. Still heavily imprinted in their homes. Like we did once. Only the rascal Kismet changed her mood, with us, and with them.

We traveled through the Russian occupied front. Our food provisions were occasionally filled up with bread when we met on the way a Russian military kitchen which brought food to the soldiers.

Suddenly and somehow the world started to fill up with more people: families going home on wagons filled with children and possessions, and soldiers crossing the road.

We rode in the wagon for two weeks and with little rest. The word "Home" was pushing us, almost without stop, like a burning desire.

We came to a little town. It was late afternoon and we needed a good night's rest. The horses looked sickly and were on the edge of exhaustion.

The little town, full of rubble and left only with a few bombarded houses, was filled with life. Russian soldiers had their night stop there, and wagons with families also stopped there too.

We camped our wagon near a little stream and we went happy and relieved to stretch our bodies close to the stream.

Our man companions, after long discussion and futile

persuasion, left us alone. They wanted us to come with them--mostly my sister and one of the other girls--to the stable to sleep. When they could not persuade us that they were asking for long-due pay for their hospitality, they abandoned us completely.

We were happy and exhausted, running to the stream, taking off our torn shoes to put our hot feet in the cool water.

Two handsome Russian officers came to the stream to wash their socks, and the discussion started. We had an advantage, partly to understand the Russian language. Our Slavic Czech language is similiar.

After long explaining and laughter, they told us that it is very dangerous for young girls to be in a place filled with soldiers, especially Russian soldiers hungry for sex. They gracefully promised to give us a room in their crumbling headquarters where we would be sheltered from all the dangers of the night. We agreed with great relief.

My sister and I and one of the other girls went to the wagon to pack our belongings. The other girl stayed at the stream to wash our few pots after our meager meal.

The night stars gently fell over the fields and houses. The dusk was like a beautiful silver shawl, bordered with stars and laced with moon. Suddenly our friend at the stream came running to us, and the pots and pans were making noise, sounds of clasping and clapping like drums. Her anguished voice stopped our chatter: "Girls, girls! We cannot sleep in the headquarters. I heard them speak together. They rationed all four of us to their friends for the night.

The night was there; running and screaming was in the air. The Russian coassacks, with their lanterns, were in a drunken mood, and the women who were sleeping in the stables with their husbands were mercilessly raped.

Four young girls with big anguish in their hearts slipped

Rose Weiss Herstik

to the front of the wagon between the driver's seat and covered themselves with rugs. If their heart sounds had been drums, the night would have been filled with drums, like a squadron of soldiers marching and drumming away. The girls hardly dared to breathe.

Suddenly lantern lights and drunken voices came closer and closer. Shivering and praying, we were sitting on our knees close together, our heads covered. The Cossacks came to the back of the wagon, looking for goods. They were throwing out all the little belongings we had. Putting their grimy hands everywhere, suddenly one of them discovered my sister's head. A joyfully drunken scream came from his mouth: "Devusky, devusky. Girls, Girls!" We started to scream, pray and cry.

In my wild and last resort, when the Cossack pulled my sister's hair I pulled up my courage, took my wooden Dutch shoe, and with full force hit the Coassack in his face and broke his lantern. He screamed and cursed as I bruised his face. Then the big rescue came, the patrol was close and the soldiers ran away.

An we started every day more and more to believe in miracles!

The morning came, like a big relief. We settled in te wagon to make our journey in another big adventure which took us toward home.

January 30, 1975. The rainy nostalgic afternoon gives me a feeling of wanting to remember and bring back the past.

Our hosts started to feel impatient. They started to feel that four girls are a burden to them. We came closer and closer to the Polish border. Our two skinny undernourished horses were close to giving up and dying. Our food reserves were very low. But the lonesome abandoned gardens gave us, happily, their reserves of fruit and fresh vegetables.

happy and carefree morning we decided to be liberated from our male companions. My mind wanders back to the day

Rose Weiss Herstik

when we found a small cart--we were like children, happy to find a toy. We put in the cart our few belongings and supplies. Two of us up in the front pulling the cart, and two of us pushing it in the back, singing happily. How cruel a human mind can be--we never thought about the child who maybe played happily in the cart just a short time ago and now was maybe dead.

Seeing the wagons passing by in two directions was a dream come true, only once in a thousand years. EVERYONE WAS FREE! What a great word, and what a special feeling. Everybody in this special world was a different nationality and everybody displayed that with big pride. Somehow everybody managed to produce his national flag and displayed it on his wagon. The flags twisted and turned in the mild wind. The smiling, happy faces, the greetings that were thrown, and words, were a scene from the Fourth of July.

Our goal was 200 miles away. It was a border where the first train had to bring us to Poland and through Poland, home to Czechoslovakia.

In our happy mood we never thought about how very painful our homecoming would be. It was like wanted to close and shelter our minds for a short time and be happy without any limits.

Our days and nights were carefree, but our poor feet started to feel the burden of every day's miles. We stopped more and more to nurse our blistered feet. Sometimes the towns, flattened by bombs and filled with ashes provided hardly a place to rest or sleep.

One night a small, deserted village house gave us the perfect place for rest. The shelves in the living room were full of books. It was an idyllic place. I could not help myself from feeling sorry for my enemies. The faces of the children stared at me from the pictures. That brought me back in my mind to think about our thousands of beloved children killed cruelly and without mercy.

Rose Weiss Herstik

I took the beautifully bound books of Goethe and Shiller from the shelves and put them in the cart, not knowing then, that the Russian soldiers will in a few days from now throw them with great passion in lake Odra.

January 9, 1975. It is a lazy, rainy Sunday morning. The rain is falling on the green trees like pearls on a bride's crown. I am trying to put together my thoughts and reverse them to summer, 1945.

We were coming closer every day to our goal. The June was in full bloom. The countryside was in her most festive dress, like a young girl prepared to meet her first lover, and the sweet smell in the air was like a perfume which sprinkled her delicate body.

Pushing and pulling the cart, very tired, skinny--but liberated from all the evils. We came to the outskirts of our long-expected town on the Polish-German border. The next morning we are at least and at last at the border. It was everywhere filled with emigrants like us. But it did not bear any marks visible of a town. It was flattened to the earth like the rest of Germany. Only the lovely green forest in the middle with a small river, reminded us of a place on earth.

When we started to talk to people we found out that that was our goal from where the first trains started to roll to Poland. We came after hours to a small station. The place was filled with Polish families sitting on their bundles, holding on to them like a museum would hold on and cherish precious paintings. Screaming and laughter were in the air. The odors of food and unwashed people overwhelmed the delicate smells from the gardens. The kids were crying and running around between the bundles and their parents who were sitting on them like chickens on their eggs.

The news for us was unpleasant--the first train, we found out, will come in three days! The last train had left just one hour ago. Noon was high, and the warm sunshine

looked upon us like a lovable jovial uncle, giving us the benefit of his warmth and smile. One of us stood with the bundle in the closest possible place to the coming train. The other three of us went to raid the neighboring gardens for vegetables which we later cooked in a soup for our dinner. The late afternoon brought clouds, and the dusk was falling on us in a hurry. The clouds were heavy with summer rain. It started to sprinkle like when you shake a salt shaker.

March 5, 1975. It is raining and I feel like the rain would bring back the memories just where I stopped to write the last time. The urge to write is strong. I don't care about my other chores, I have to write.

Suddenly, like a sunrise from heaven, we heard a train whistle. The people started jumping, pushing and screaming. Everybody tried to join together his belongings and the screaming kids. Excitement was in the air. A long train; the front with a big locomotive engine, wagons with canons and broken cars from the war front. Delighted and happy, we four, slim and young girls, squeezed ourselves into the personnel wagon and occupied the best places. Sitting happily before the windows, we were watching the crowd jostling and screaming, trying to push into the two wagons. The place was in a few minutes so filled up you couldn't drop a pin.

Suddenly the whistle started to blow, the train started to move. We watched the people outside who did not have the good fortune to squeeze themselves in. The train and the night came together like in harmony.

The train ran for a few miles and suddenly stopped. We heard rumbling upfront, puffing from the locomotive engine, and an unpleasant quiet in the air. Nodbody dared to move, for fear of losing his place. But the train did not move, and someone decided to go and look what happened. The discovery was suprising. The locomotive engine wanted to be on his own and liberated, and detached from the train. The whole train was just sitting there, like an unhappy suitor.

Rose Weiss Herstik

It was late, dark and raining as we stumbled back to the train station. It was full of abandoned trains, without locomotives. The little waiting room was filled like a ripe melon. Suddenly once more, the familiar lanterns and screaming of women reached our tired ears. The Cossacks were in their drunken mood and started to be amorous. When the procession of lanterns came closer, and the rain heavier, we four ran underneath the train where we were protected from the rain ~~and the swords of the Cossacks~~. We were fortunate, for the trains did not move, and we were protected from the rain and the Cossacks. Our tired bodies did not care; we fell asleep. The rain stopped and the morning came closer. The night was still in the air. The screaming and running stopped and the darkness painted grotesque pictures. In the darkness, we saw a train coming. The locomotive stopped gradually like she would be aware of tired, sleeping people. The train was long. Our decision was unanimous: We started to climb on the top of a wagon. There it was; we were sitting on top of a big machine. We didn't care. We wanted to go home. The darkness was still with us and we fell asleep.

The moving train and coming day woke us up. To our great surprise, our hands and faces were black from oil. We were sitting on the top of the biggest German cannon you can imagine!

Around us we saw laughing faces of Russian soldiers. Embarrassed and frightened, we looked around. But these were intelligent and friendly faces. They started to speak to us, reaching to us with bread and bacon. Our hunger broke our fear. We started to eat, and the train was rolling toward the Polish town, Katovice, closer to our home.

March 16, 1965. It's quiet... Sunday morning, the sleeping family. It's raining and the morning air always seems to attract my writing pen.

Rose Weiss Herstik

After a few hours, the falling snake-like train came slowly to a halt. We stopped in the fields. In the distance we saw the steaming train and people. Dirty, tired, happy we slid down from our monumental seats. Our feet moved slowly, like from wooden figurines. After twenty minutes of walking, we came to a big railroad station with proud sign, "Katovice."

The station was like a madhouse, full of trains, with people hanging on to them like ripe grapes. The noise was almost unbearable. Everybody pushing everyone, trying to hang on with tired hands to the train, hanging on the steps and sitting on the road. The lucky ones inside were pressed together, like dried raisins in a box. With some pushing and cursing from all sides, we found ourselves in the tight package. The train, as if it had just been waiting for us, started immediatley to move.

The next big town was "Tessin," the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia.

After a few hours when we stepped out of the train, we did not mind our broken, hurting bones and muscles. The bright afternoon sun was shining upon us like a golden queen, with a million-dollar smile. We felt like the richest girls in the world.

A mass of people directed us to a building where there was an organization, handing us out the first money after years. The first smell of money was our first contact with the greedy world. Before the building were lined up trucks filled up with people like us.

But this time, the trucks journey was freedom. The trucks, filled to capacity, ran to the other side of the border, to Czechoslovakian part of Tešín.

April 6, 1975. I am coming closer to the end of our journey. My feelings are mixed. I feel like I would leave behind me forever the magic and adventure.

Rose Weiss Herstik

The truck which we finally squeezed into was filled up. The driver started to drive the puffing truck toward the border. We were singing and laughing. After a few hours we came to the border and through without difficulty. It was evening when we arrived in Czechoslovakian part of [✓]Tesin. The town bore all the marks of a recent war. It was ghost-town-like. We went to the house of the Czeck girl's family. They gave us a place to sleep. The next day we had a tearful goodbye with our two friends and companions of our journey. We left them behind in [✓]Tesin and never saw them again.

A new episode in our lives started. My sister Edith and I started to walk toward Trnava, which was our hometown. It was a journey through villages where we slept in the homes of the villagers and were barked at by the village dogs. We begged for food. And everybody was friendly.

After three days of hiking we came to the town [✓]Trencin where we hoped to find our aunt. With big anguish in our hearts we looked for her and never found her. Dissapointed and heartbroken we left the town with the pm train. In two hours we came to our home town. We stepped out of the train with mixed and frightened emotions, knowing that we never find our home and loved ones again. And that we have to start to build our lives, stone after stone, again. And the big pain started to be realistic. It was like we had been woken up with a harsh hand after a long sleep.

Once more the real adventure of life started, and we were on our own.

→ ^{HAD} Our lives went on. I have the feeling I would one day go back with my memories to the grueling and cruel part of the concentration camp. Bur for that I have to make myself ready emotionally to live once again through it. Unitl now I am hiding as behind iron doors, and it will be very painful when I will open them.

*Rose Weiss Herstik*PRAGUE: COMING HOME

The time after coming home was a very confused mixture of feelings. We have known for a long time that our beloved family was dead. We were on our own, but young and happy to be alive. Our lives started to touch on reality. We had to live and started to work. I started to sew, and that was the practical way of starting to belong to society.

But the little town where we were born had too many painful memories hidden in every corner and every street.

I wrote to my friend Greta in Prague. She invited me to come live with her. She had a beautiful big place in the center of Prague. It was once in Hitler's time the home of the German Ambassador which he left in a hurry.

The big, lovely old Prague was a tragic city for us. Thirty years ago when I first came to the majestic city, my heart was captured. The old buildings stood there proud in baroque and renaissance, and the city is laced with beautiful bridges and tied together with a silver stream, called Vltava. It was a liberated city. The people were happy and free. But not for very long. The unhappy Czech people were living captured and oppressed by other dictators and power.

May 18, 1976: Sometimes the past is emerging before my eyes, slowly, like a cloud would disappear. It is so much I would like to write, it is a full life. But I am pointing only the important contours of a powerful picture. Some things will always stay in the shadows, and buried in my soul, they could maybe hurt people I love. They are maybe only important to me, and anyway, they are a part of a long-forgotten world.

Greta's apartment was big and beautiful. The furniture was heavy. The bedroom was baroque style. The toilet mirror was laced with gold, and marble angels were holding candles. The flacons were silver and crystal, filled with precious perfume.

Greta was a lady of high society. A long time ago, before

the concentration camp, an expensive "courtisana" or mistress.

I came to Prague a 22 year-old naive girl, untouched by worldly experience. My big, home-baked loaves of bread and piece of bacon were a solid contribution to the hungry and simple food supplies.

I begged Greta to let my sister live with us and let her come to Prague. She was staying in the meantime in Slovakia.

There were days when Edith and I sat and shivered on a bench under the windows, close to our apartment when Greta had her boyfriends over. We were overwhelmed with days full with joy in the opera, concerts and theaters.

Our immediate future emerged, in setting up a sewing salon. We came together, fifteen girls from the concentration camp. We made a lucrative living.

The time has wings and is flying fast. After the third year of living in Prague the political situation started to bring in like the witches brew steaming in the kettle. The communists started to show their strengths. Our independent shop started to fall apart. Some of the girls were married. Two of them had the good fortune to go to America. At that time, America was beyond my wildest dreams. Edith was just married and they went to England. I came to my friends, and we talked a lot about Israel.

The Haganah organized in Czechoslovakia, a secret village in the mountains, with the consent of the Czechoslovakian government. And I knew in my heart where I belonged.

On the day of President Bene's funeral, when the mourning crowds filled the streets of Prague, I decided in my mind and heart to forever leave Europe. By then, after living three years in a big city, my horizons and sophistications were widened. I was a woman of will, and liberated.

Little did I know then that marriage and family would very soon stamp out my liberation. Willingly I left for the training

camp. I had decided to be a soldier, to go to Israel to fight.

The train brought me to a small station buried in the mountains. Two girls slipped out of the train with all their belongings, which were neatly packed in two suitcases. My young and then trim figure was dressed in gray flannel pants and a light blue angora pullover. I did not realize how revealing it was. A special autobus brought us to a closed military gate. The training camp for Israel was in a small bombarded-out village called Mikulov. Everyone there was a soldier. Men and women strolled in the village between the few barracks.

So far I had learned that the village had a first aid station, a canteen, a theater and mainly a recruiting place, barracks and finally a "shooting gallery" in the mountains.

The soldiers, waiting for us at the gate, brought us to a small house. The room was already filled with girls. My mind was made up: I wanted to be a nurse in the first-aid station.

The interviewing officer came in. I did not know then that his rank was a Major. Sylvia, the big blonde girl who came in with me was a noisy type with the behavior of a show-off. In contrast, I was petite and lady-like. The officer pointed to Sylvia and said, "She will be in my training group." The he turned to me and said with a smile, "And you will fit in my group beautifully, too."

So I wound up in a training group which was far from my mind and hopes.

Now, for the second time in my life, I was sitting in the seat of a canon and trained to be a measurer for the anti-aircraft canons. That is what the master fate and destiny decided for that point of my life.

May 26, 1975: It is a holiday. The quiet morning brings my pen in motion. Lately my head is full of thoughts and memories. I want to write but I don't have always the time.

There are so many distractions.

The first day in the village was full of excitement. Putting on a soldier's uniform and getting a rifle was the highlight of the morning. The small houses have been where the barracks and wooden beds were the home for a short time. After putting my soldier's household in order, which consisted of a bed and a shelf with drawers, I left with Sylvia to the cantina. The way to it was crowded with soldiers. Men and women laughing and joking were everywhere. It was a bright Sunday noon. The village was like a bird nested between majestic mountains and forests. Suddenly, two soldiers appeared at my side. One laughing heartily, saluted me and said, "If you don't mind me telling you soldier, your flys open." My face became bright red and I touched the slit on my pants with my hand. It was open. I was not used to wearing soldiers uniform with a button slit. But his beautiful white teeth and very handsome face instantly captured my heart and has held it for a lifetime. We talked and laughed. That is when I met my final destiny, my beloved husband, Harry.

The serious business of recruiting started the next day. The bugle awoke us at 5:00am. We washed, made our beds, ate breakfast and went with our officers to the recruiting station.

June 8, 1975: I did not write for a long time. Also, my health was not the best these days.

Being a soldier was a serious business. Our training officers were high-ranking soldiers, and the training to be on the front in Israel was very strict. We were being trained to operate anti-aircraft canons - heavy and light. I was on the light. Our canon was like 37 millimeter German canon, and the training with guns was our daily program. Soon I became a very neat soldier, not forgetting to close my buttons on my uniform.

Rose Weiss Herstik

After a few weeks of training, I received an important telegram from a lawyer, telling me I had to come to Moravska-Ostrava, to collect my inheritance. I was the only survivor, after my aunt's death, and she was the only sister of my mother. It was almost impossible to get permission to leave the camp during these days of training but people were sneaking in and out all the time. They had to attend to personal business before they went to Israel. I went to present my telegram to my captain. Although he did not give me a straight approval to leave the camp, his answer gave me all the encouragement I needed. He said, "You do what you have to do, but I don't know about it."

Friday morning, in the very early morning hours, I took from my suitcase a neat dress, stockings, shoes and my camel hair coat. I changed myself from a soldier into a young lady. Harry's approval was complete.

In order to leave the camp secretly, I had to pass a watchtower unseen. The terrain surrounded by woods was a big help. I crawled up the small hill, trying to take care of my silk stockings and high-heeled shoes, around the watchtower in the crisp hours of the early morning. The quiet in the woods, the emerging sun and lovely singing of the birds put my soul and heart in a holiday mood. When I descended the hill, the main road wound between the woods like a silver belt. The buckle of the belt was the small railroad station, where I wanted to be very soon, and invisible. I did not walk on the main road but in the woods beside the road. The traffic started to be noticeable, trucks rolling toward the camp with supplies and jeeps rolling toward the station with officers.

I came to a point where the road was winding like a silver belt toward the station. There was no hiding possible anymore.

I emerged from the woods and stepped on the road when a jeep came, stopping sharply to a halt, very close to me. The four

Rose Weiss Herstik

officers sitting in it looked at me curiously. The commander, with a strict face, invited me to come into the car. He started to ask questions about my being on the road. In a few minutes we came to the station. My heart was pounding like church bells on high holidays. The commanding officer took me into the station office. I tried to be calm, showed him my telegram and told him the story about my inheritance. His face was like a mask. He approached me with a question about my captain, "Did he allow you to go out of the camp?" I denied that several times.

My train was approaching the station. I pulled my courage together and begged him to let me go away. I promised when I came back to call him immediately and take my punishment.

The engine whistle started to blow when he finally said, "Go and report back." I ran to the train just in time. When I stepped on the first step, the train started to move.

X June 30, 1975: The crisp California morning has the quality of a beautiful diamond. It is crisp and brilliant. I feel very fortunate that I can live in the Eden on Earth, called California.X

After years, I came back to "Moravska-Ostrava". It is a big coal mining city in Czechoslovakia. The only sister of my mother used to live there with her family. They were well-to-do people. I used to enjoy my vacations with my aunt and cousins when I was a little girl. I was the only child of her young, dead sister. Now everybody was dead. My heart was heavy with grief. I was to get the inheritance because I was the only survivor on my aunt's side.

The attorney was expecting me. And everything went on like in a dream. The lawyer sold the big house for me, and all I had to do was to sign the contracts. Suddenly overnight I was a rich girl; a half million crown was even then alot of money. I stayed overnight in the lawyer's house. That was Friday. Saturday I was shopping like mad.

Early Sunday morning found me standing still in gaze in the train station, with a big linen bag full of money neatly bundled

Rose Weiss Herstik

together. It never occurred to me, until just now, that if the police would have found me there with the money, they would have suspected me of robbery. I came late evening to the little familiar station in Mikulov. The train stopped with lazy motion. I tripped, and tired with the heavy bag in my hands, and still in amazement, went to the telephone. I reported in. The major told me to report the next day to the officer. The night was like a dark cape over the hills. I stumbled, tired and happy with my heavy load, undisturbed into the camp. Harry was sitting before the barracks where I lived. He was waiting for me. I happily unloaded my baggage and we embrace joyfully. He took the bag and hid it somewhere in the little room he shared with two friends. Then I went to my barracks and fell asleep immediately. The night was very short, for the bugle soon woke me and I went to the recruiting station. The morning recruiting officer had a solemn face as he called several names to report. Mine was among them. Harry had already told me that the rumor was that they wanted to throw us out and discharge us from the company. Somehow I was not worried. I had confidence deep down that it would be straightened out.

My commanding officer told me that a serious charge was brought against me - breaking out of the camp. But confidentially, he said the Major will be here in the evening and I should see him for maybe he would redeem the punishment.

The early evening found me still wondering what will happen, when I came to the headquarters of the Major and other officers. There was noise and singing in the air. I reported at the door in military fashion and asked for the Major. I looked back and Harry was there, standing with a smile on his face to give me confidence. I came into a small room, filled with smoke and alcohol fumes, where there were several officers and the Major. They looked at me in amazement when I reported to the Major and asked him not to discharge me. That however, was the pride of

Rose Weiss Herstik

my courage. He was in a good mood, with a drink in his hand. He looked at me curiously and said, "You know, I like that you never betrayed your commanding officer, and that you denied that he let you go. That takes character. You can go. I'll personally straighten out your problem with the discharge." I thanked him properly and came out like in a sleep-walking.

The maneouver time was shortening and we prepared ourselves for the big maneouver. And the final preparing for Israel, where the last fight for independence was temporarily dying down.

We trained heavily, everybody had his place at the canon and was mastering it skillfully. Suddenly, a few days before the manoeuvres, the commanding soldier of the canon got sick. Our commanding officer pointed to me and asked that I take over the command of the canon. Immediately I fell into panic, after weeks of training. I mustered my position fully. But I didn't know everything about commanding the canon. I hadn't paid too much attention to that. I respectfully tried to explain that to the officer, but he had confidence in my intelligence. Well - how wrong he was.

The final morning of the manoeuvres, my mood was very low and my confidence in a disappearing stage. We had our canon, standing on a little hill, camouflaged through the forest. Normally, it would have been a lovely picnic place. The canon was in firing position, when I had to give my orders. A small group of men were approaching it, the general and Major being flanked by them. My panic was complete. I did the obvious - what any female can afford to do - I passed out.

I felt two girls dragging me under a tree, and when I opened my eyes, the General and Major were standing concerned over me. My commanding officer was explaining the situation to them. After the General and Major left, my commanding officer excused himself to me for putting me in that position. This was actually the high point, and also the downhill start of my military career. When the ending of the manoeuvres brought us back to civil

Rose Weiss Herstik

9.

Rose weiss Herstik

life, we came back to Prague, where I married Harry in a civil ceremony.

We prepared ourselves for Israel where the rest of Harry's family, his sister and brothers were waiting for us.

ISRAEL

The first years in Israel were a struggle. But also a big love and great pride grew in my heart for that little, torn wonderful country. My two sons were born there. I never suspected then that the time would come when my heart and soul would be equally divided between two countries, and that I would be a proud citizen of America, where hopefully found my end of moving, and settled forever.

Israel, 1948. Israel, the beautiful small country of heroes. Harry had already a passport. He went to Israel one month before me. We had a civil ceremony in Prague, and I was waiting for my papers. In the meantime, I was working in the office from where the trips were put together. We wanted to have the religious ceremony with Harry's family in Israel. I went with the second ship to Israel. Harry was waiting at the ship for me. He was a soldier, but in 1948 war was already ending when I arrived. The military vehicles were waiting for us at the ship. They took us to a military place where they registered us for release. We traveled the road where orange groves are. It was beautiful, I saw for the first time the trees full of oranges. The orange groves are called "Pardesim" in Hebrew. It was an exciting and wonderful time. We went to Harry's sister Lyly's home, she was my age. Blanka was also Harry's sister, two years older, Mariška, Sandor, Pesach and Salda were Harry's brothers and sisters also. They all have been married and had children; it was a large family.

The first years in Israel were hard. My son Ronie was born. We lived with Harry's sister Lyly. She had an apartment on the Ancient Ruins of Madrigot Sukri. "Madrigot means steps and "Sukri" means market. It was maybe fifty or more steps to the old market. On both sides of the steps were hundreds of years old apartments, and my sister-in-law lived

Rose Weiss Herstik

in one of them. She had two rooms, a very small kitchen and a room which was the so-called living room. We paid rent to Lyly and her husband to rent one room. Harry found work and I was with the baby. Lyly had a six year old son and a twelve month old girl. We struggled. One day Harry was called to Jerusalem; he was a weaver master. They were looking for a weaver which would weave knots for a special little ovens for cooking. The ovens were called "Primus" and were burning oil through the "knots". Harry went to Jerusalem. One stormy smokey day, we loaded our furniture in a truck. Harry rented an apartment in a village close to Jerusalem. I was sitting with a few month old baby in the front of the truck besides the driver. We came to the village after few hours. Tired and hungry it was afternoon. People stopped us entering the village. We did not buy the apartment and did not have the right to move in. Suddenly the Mayor of the village came and more and more people screaming we have no right for the apartment. All screaming and almost causing a riot. We had to turn around. We went in to a hotel. The furniture stayed on the truck. The next day Harry's boss found us an apartment, in Jerusalem. The part was called, "Montefiore". The owners of the house lived in the house, down in the garden was a patio with a small one room apartment. But the garden was nice and "Montefiore" had a nice neighborhood with hotels just across the house. We were happy with the very small place. Suddenly the rains came very strong. One night the storm was very strong, the water came in the room. I woke when the water was almost to Ronie's crib. I woke up Harry, we took all blankets we had put around Ronie and run across the street to the hotel.

The next village from Montefiore was an Arab village. On Independence Day in 1953 and everybody went to Jerusalem to see the parade. Close to the Arab village lived a very religious man with four children. Late afternoon the small

Rose Weiss Herstik

children were running around undressed, without shoes, and people asked about their parents, they said that they were asleep. Somebody went to look and they found the man and wife murdered. Their throats were slit. Our lives went on. Ronie was five-and-a-half years old and my son, Michael, was born in 1955. Harry's forty-four year old brother, Sandor, had two little children and also had throat cancer. His eighteen year younger wife, Aranka, was suddenly a widow with two little children ages four and seven years old. She went to work in a military cantina. The children were alone most of the time.

We already lived in, ⁱⁿ Ramat Gan and had a small nice condominium. We went to Aranka and the children how often we could. Once more the war erupted in Isreal. Harry was a soldier, but he was not on the front; just in reserves.

Bombardments started and we started to dig a hole in the garden. Harry came home over weekends and made shelter against the bombarding. Six year old Ronie helped to dig the hole. The bombarding started and I went with the children hiding under the bed. There was milk for the children only twice a week and vegetables were rare. Luckily it was not a long war; the Five Day War.

The years went by, Harry was a manager of the factory. My sister Edith moved from England with her husband Andrew and son Peter to Los Angeles. One night fire erupted in the neighborhood where the factory where Harry worked and three other factories burned down. We were without work. Edith wrote us to come to America. The Czechoslovakian Quarter was low. In a few months we had the visa and the passports. We sold the condominium and bought tickets to America. We went with the new ship "Zion" in January of 1959. Ronie was nine years old and Michael a sturdy four-and-a-half years old.

We came to New York and traveled to Los Angeles where my

Rose Weiss Herstik

4.

Rose Weiss Herstik.

sister was waiting at the plane. ~~We hugged each other after ten~~
~~years.~~

Rose Weiss Herstik
Rose Weiss Herstik

1.

AMERICA

We came to America from Israel in 1959. We stepped from the airplane in L.A. Airport. My husband Harry was holding in his arms our four-and-a-half year old bouncing son Michael. I Rose, was holding my son Ronie's hand, he was nine years old.

My sister, Edith, was waving at us holding Peter, her six year old son's hand. In the other hand, she had two big red cowboy hats. Her son had one on his head. We ran to each other, kissed and cried. I did not see Edith for ten years. She lived after the war in England and my family and I lived in Israel.

All three boys marched happily with their hats on their heads.

We went to live in a rented room and two hundred dollars in our pockets. Harry looked for work the next day. An english note was written by my brother-in-law with his name and address it was written to the bus driver, please to tell Harry where in Downtown to go down from the bus, and advise him where the bus is located when he has to boarded home.

On the way home from Downtown, Harry missed the bus in every station. And he had to walk from Downtown to Hollywood where we lived on Mariposa Avenue, all the way home.

We were few months in America when I found out that I was pregnant. It was a hard time for me with two little children and not speaking English, the money Harry made was little even when he worked two jobs. My alteration money covered only Michael's kindergarden. Ronie was nine years old and went to school. On Mariposa, the apartment was upstairs; many steps. I was already the fourth month pregnant when I started to bleed. Suddenly Harry got one night very sick. I did not know English and could not call the Doctor. I called a friend. We ran to the emergency. He had to have surgery right away to remove his appendix.

I was already six months pregnant and bleeding when I went into labor (two months after Harry's surgery). I lost the child.

Our luck changed when Harry found work in copy machine business. He was brilliant with any machine, and he learned soon to service copy machines and advanced to a manager. I worked for a while in a cleaning store and made alterations, and at I. Magnum on Wilshire. It was hard with two children, so I started to sew and make alterations at home.

In time, we found and moved into a more comfortable apartment. We met and started becoming close friends with people from our background and country, and together with my sister and her family, our children close in age, we didn't feel so alone.

In 1964, Harry & I received from German, \$2,500.00 together for the concentration camps. We used the money for a down payment on a house in the Valley. Our house was comfortable and our children grew up happy and went close by to schools.

We had happy times. Saturdays we made partys, always in another friends house. We were nicely dressed. Our house nicely furnished. We worked hard and saved. Never bought thing we couldn't afford and never had unpaid bills. I was very strict with that.

Ronie went to college for two years and from there to UCLA University. Mike went to high school.

In 1972, we were ready to go back to Israel for a visit. We bought the airplane tickets. The disaster came just two weeks before the travel. Harry's company in New York went bankrupt.

We decided to go to Israel anyway and when we came back we started a new life. We started our own copy machine business. Harry knew lots of people. So he sold and repaired machines, rented and sold supplies. I was on the phone with the customer and gave Harry messages, and was the secretary and accountant.

It worked very well. We could afford to travel every year and save money. But, Harry was smoking alot. Harry got pneumonia, high fever. We hardly came home and we had to rush him to the hospital. The years went by with sickness but he was not a complainer. He used medications and a hand inhaler. On Saturdays we played cards and on occassion went to a charity event.

Our sons were growing up. We were so proud of them. Ronie became a Reform Rabbi and Michael had store with birds.

In 1990 Ronie married his beautiful girlfriend, our daughter-in-law, Sylvia. Michael is not yet married.

Harry's health slipped more and more. One morning in early November 1992, suddenly he became very sick, he had terrible pains in his abdomen and could not breathe. We rushed him, with Michael, to the emergency. The doctors gave him test after test, and they couldn't find what was wrong with him. On a Friday, about noon, we admitted him for the first time to the hospital. In the hospital he got worse. They made more and more tests. In between tests he had only liquids, and he lost more and more weight until he was only 90 pounds. I cooked for him and brought the food to the hospital. After a week they sent him home.

They gave him strong medication, hand inhalers, and oxygen tank. He had oxygen in his nose twenty-four hours a day. But the pains started after a few days, so strong that Mike had to rush him at night to emergency. They admitted him back to the hospital, and the grueling tests started once more. They suspected inflammation of the pancreas. After ten long days they found out that his vertebra was damaged and collapsing, pushing on his intestines, which robbed him completely of breath. The doctors decided they could not help him anymore and sent him home.

His terrible torture and mine started. They brought .

Rose Weiss Herstik
Rose Weiss Herstik

4.

from Medicare; the hospital bed, the oxygen tank, the small breathing machine with a face mask and electronic patches for the back, a wheelchair, a comode and a pyramid of pills to take three times a day.

The days were mingled with pains and every four hours, with breathing machine mask, beside the twenty-four hour oxygen in his nose and electronic patches on his back.

The oxygen lines went from the Den to the bedroom. He was mostly in bed or I helped him make a few steps to the bathroom. I was suddenly an accomplished nurse. I was also running between kitchen and bedroom, constantly washing laundry, changing bed, feeding him and put on electronic patches or putting on his oxygen mask, cleaning the urine bottle which he needed constantly. I brushed his teeth because he was too weak to do it and sometimes Mike or me would shower him or wash him. Mike was luckily with us. Mike took him in the wheelchair to the doctor. Ronie and Sylvia came every week from San Diego.

The nights were much worse than the days after taking all the pills and mask, he couldn't sleep or breathe. He was sweating and had to change the bedding and his pajamas three times a night. At night he was holding my hand. When I was giving him breathing mask, I was sitting on the bed and I kissed him and assured him he will be soon better. He told me all the time how he loved me and he kissed my hands.

There were days he couldn't have a bowel movement for three or four days, and others were days he had diarrhea and couldn't help himself to mess up his pajamas and bed. That robbed him of all his dignity. He knew he will not survive his sickness for long.

Mike had to take out the hospital bed and put back his bed. The mattress from the hospital bed was hurting his back.

Harry's friend Carl Fried came once a week for two hours to sit with him and so did Ben Rys. That time I went to the market. But I slept only when Harry slept, three or four

Rose Weiss Herstik

5.

Rose Weiss Herstik

at night and I was totally exhausted. He was sick at home for six months. The last month before his death my children insisted I take help. I found Maria through a organization. She was experienced with sick people and she came once a week for three hours. The last month of his life he started to cough badly. He coughed out pieces of his lungs. The night before his death he could not breathe at all, and I panicked and put the oxygen machine on high, put the mask on his face and he got better. The next day Maria supposed to come, but I did not want to go from the home, but he insisted. I came home sooner than I expected, but when I came back he was dead. It was like he did not want to die in my presence.

My Dearest Harry...

I miss you always. ~~Over~~ forty-five years together were rain and rainbows, but I know I'll meet you again, with all my love, your Rose.

After every dark night
comes a day of light.
Sometimes the days are rainy
But the sunshine comes always through.
You are stronger than you ever know.
The life passes by mixed with rain and rainbows,
If you fill you heart with love,
Love will be everywhere.
When you approach the age of wisdom,
Your age will teach you everything you lived through,
Mixed with good and bad,
Was worthwhile to live for.

Rose Weiss Herstik

Rose Weiss Herstik



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